

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 SCA-01 OMB-01 DPW-01 IO-14

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 AID-20 DRC-01

SSO-00 /130 W

----- 071090

P 281240Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9689

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

DEPCHJUSMAG UDORN THAILAND

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 5084

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LA

SUBJECT: DETENTION OF AMERICAN CITIZEN BY PATHET LAO
IN SHOOTING INCIDENT

REF: VIENTIANE 5041

SUMMARY: MET SEPARATELY WITH SOTH PHETRASY AND PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, TWO SENIOR PATHET LAO IN VIENTIANE, AND EXPRESSED OUR CONCERN RE CASE: GIBSON'S DETENTION VIOLATED LAO LAW AND MANNER WHOLE INCIDENT PLAYED BY PATHET LAO (ILLEGAL DETENTION AND DISTORTED RADIO BROADCAST) DID NOT CONTRIBUTE TO COOPERATIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONSHIP. SOTH SAID "POLITICAL ASPECT" OF CASE HAD TO BE INVESTIGATED AND HE HAD DIRECTED JOINT POLICE TO EXPEDITE REPORT TO JCCIA. PHOUMI HAD HEARD OF CASE BUT DID NOT KNOW DETAILS AND WOULD INQUIRE. (REST OF CONVERSATION REPORTED SEPARATELY.) ALSO CALLED PROSECUTOR ON CASE. CONSUL AGAIN SAW GIBSON WHO REMAINS WELL TREATED AND IN GOOD SPIRITS. ONLY ONE PRESS STORY IN BANGKOK WORLD. END SUMMARY

1. 1. BY CHANCE RAN INTO SOTH PHETRASY, SENIOR PATHET LAO
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REPRESENTATIVE ON MIXED COMMITTEE, AT NOONDAY SOCIAL

AFFAIR. WE HAD CORDIAL TEN MINUTE PRIVATE TALK. I SAID I WAS GLAD TO HAVE OPPORTUNITY MEET HIM BECAUSE I KNEW HE WAS VERY BUSY, BUT THERE WAS CASE OF DETAINED AMERICAN WHICH CONCERNED US SERIOUSLY. HE IMMEDIATELY KNEW WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT AND SAID HE HAD GIVEN DIRECTIVE TO POLICE TO HASTEN MAKING REPORT TO JCCIA SO THAT MATTER COULD BE SETTLED. HE HAD HEARD THAT GIBSON'S ASSAILANTS WERE "PIRATES" AND THAT GIBSON WAS ACTING IN SELF-DEFENSE. THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM IN QUICKLY RESOLVING LEGAL CASE, BUT THEY HAD TO CONSIDER "POLITICAL ASPECT." HERE HIS COMMENTS BECAME SOMEWHAT CONFUSED, BUT HE TALKED ABOUT WANTING TO ASCERTAIN THAT GIBSON WAS NOT IN FACT DISGUISED MILITARY CARRYING GUN ILLEGALLY AND INVOLVED IN SOME SORT OF PLOT.

2. I SOUGHT TO CONVINCE HIM GIBSON WAS PRIVATE AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN, RETIRED SINCE 1964 FROM MILITARY AND LIVING IN LAOS SINCE 1969. HOWEVER I FOUND WHAT HE WAS SAYING MOST DISTURBING, BECAUSE IT MEANT POLICE COULD PICK UP ANYONE FOR "POLITICAL" REASONS WITHOUT REFERENCE TO LAW. FURTHERMORE, DETENTION OF GIBSON WITHOUT CHARGE WAS VIOLATION OF LAO LAW. WE HAD OBLIGATION TO AMERICAN CITIZENS TO INSURE LAW APPLIED EQUITABLY. FINALLY I NOTED DISTORTION OF INCIDENT BY RADIO PATHET LAO. WE PREPARED TO SUPPORT PGNU, WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH IT, BUT THERE HAD TO BE PROPER CLIMATE. MANNER PATHET LAO USED THIS INCIDENT WAS NOT HELPFUL. I HAD HOPED TO SETTLE MATTER QUIETLY BUT RADIO PATHET LAO AND NOW BANGKOK WORLD HAD PUBLISHED BIG HEADLINES ON CASE. IF THERE WAS ANY QUESTION ON ANY SUBJECT RELATED TO U.S. ON HIS MIND I HOPED HE WOULD NOT HESITATE TO CALL US. BETTER WORK THINGS OUT THAN BLOW THEM UP. HE SMILED THROUGHOUT. BUT HE DID NOT BUDGE FROM HIS POSITION OF WAITING FOR POLICE REPORT.

3. IN MEETING WITH PHOUMI VONGVICHIT, MINFONAFF, I SAID MY PRINCIPAL REASON FOR SEEING HIM WAS GIBSON CASE. I KNEW HE WAS BUSY BUT I HAD EXHAUSTED ALL SOURCES OF RELIEF AND NOW FELT OBLIGED TO RAISE MATTER WITH HIM. I WENT OVER CASE. HE HAD HEARD OF IT BUT DID NOT KNOW DETAILS. I EXPRESSED

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CONCERN AT WHAT SOTH HAD SAID RE NEED TO CONSIDER POLITICAL ASPECT AND PATHET LAO RADIO DISTORTION OF FACTS. PHOUMI SAID HE WOULD INQUIRE, BUT THIS WAS MATTER FOR JOINT COMMITTEE AND SOTH. JOINT POLICE HAD TO AGREE ON REPORT. I POINTED OUT THAT MATTER HAD NOW COME WITHIN PURVIEW OF HIS MINISTRY IN THAT QUESTION OF SECURITY OF FOREIGNERS WAS RAISED AS WELL AS QUALITY OF RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN COUNTRY.

4. ALSO CALLED PROSECUTOR ON CASE. HE HAD ASKED JOINT POLICE TO SEND REPORT AND HAVE CASE REFERRED TO HIS OFFICE. HE EXPECTED TO HAVE IT MONDAY OR TUESDAY; PROBLEM WAS POLICE HAD TO REACH JOINT AGREEMENT.

5. BANGKOK WORLD RAN UPI STORY BY LOCAL REPORTER AS A LEAD FRONT PAGE ARTICLE THURSDAY, JUNE 27. ARTICLE STRESSED THAT GIBSON WAS BEING HELD ILLEGALLY. SINCE REPORTER APPARENTLY COULD NOT GET LOCAL AUTHORITIES TO SAY THIS, HE QUOTED EMBASSY "SPOKESMAN" WHICH WAS NOT QUITE KOSHER, BUT ARTICLE WAS OTHERWISE FAIRLY ACCURATE. NO OTHER ACCOUNTS APPEARED IN EITHER BANGKOK OR LOCAL NEWSPAPERS. NO REPORTERS HAVE CONTACTED THE PRESS OFFICER ABOUT STORY SINCE YESTERDAY.

5. CONSUL MURPHY VISITED GIBSON WHO REMAINS WELL TREATED AND IN GOOD SPIRITS. WILL TAKE NO FURTHER ACTION UNTIL AMBASSADOR RETURNS UNLESS THERE IS UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT.
CHAPMAN

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